



TRCA Youth Council Annual Report 2022-2023 Term

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INTRODUCTION

Around the world, youth councils have been created by governments, community groups, and non-profit organizations as a means of providing local youth with an opportunity to gain important skills, build capacity and network, while providing the sponsoring agencies with important input and perspectives from youth stakeholders. The long-term success of efforts to advance environmental protection and sustainability in the Toronto region depend on the support of the region's youth, both now and into the future. TRCA's Community Engagement Strategy (2017) recommends more focused engagement of youth to enhance the reach of TRCA programs and activities and prepare the next generation of conservation leaders (Actions 6.1 and 6.2). Activities of TRCA's Youth Council build on existing engagement programs while deploying tools and strategies to develop a strong network of youth driven to take active ownership of their local environment.

The Youth Council reports directly to the Regional Watershed Alliance (RWA). The mission, mandate and goals of the Youth Council, were developed by TRCA and the RWA in consultation with relevant stakeholders. At Regional Watershed Alliance Meeting #1/2017, held on November 15th, 2017, Resolution #R002/17 was approved, in part, as follows:

WHEREAS THE Terms of Reference of the Regional Watershed Alliance proposes the establishment of Watershed/Working Groups, Youth Council, and Indigenous Liaison Committee;

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT the following members of the Alliance [the RWA Working Group] work with staff to lead the establishment of Youth Council including development of Terms of Reference:

- a) Lisette Mallet; b) Amory Ngan; c) Rui Felix; d) Mick Malowany; and e) Karen Lockridge.

This report provides an overview of the 2022-2023 Youth Council program, recruitment of new Executives, workplan, and finally a program evaluation and recommendations for program improvement.

PROGRAM FRAMEWORK

There are two methods to participate in the Youth Council program; youth can register as General or Executive member. General member participation is entirely voluntary. They are notified of events and initiatives and can elect to participate. Members of the Executive are an application-based volunteer position. Youth Council Executives are expected to volunteer approximately 3 to 4 hours a week and maintain correspondence with the TRCA staff and the rest of the Executive. With TRCA staff guidance, the Executive develop a workplan for the year and choose what topics and initiatives to pursue. The intake for General members is open year-round, while the applications for the Executive only open for approximately one month.

The program framework for the Youth Council was created through a collaborative process between TRCA staff and Regional Watershed Alliance working group members. The program framework remains the same as it did in 2017 when it was developed.

The framework is intentionally open-ended so that Youth Council Executive members can develop their own project ideas to meet program goals. The ultimate goal of the Youth Council is to build healthy communities. This is achieved through four program objectives:

- a) Build capacity and engage youth by providing youth across the Toronto region with learning opportunities;
- b) Build a youth network/strengthen existing networks through creation of a broad network of youth in the region that is interested in environmental and sustainability issues;
- c) Identify youth perspectives by developing an understanding of youth opinion around current environmental issues and how these might be incorporated in the work of TRCA and its partners; and
- d) Create fun opportunities for youth through entertaining and engaging learning opportunities.

For a more fulsome discussion of program development and rationale please see the 2018-2019 Youth Council Annual Report.

A term for the Youth Council Executive begins and ends in March, with the current term being reported on running from March 2022 to March 2023.

DEFINITION OF YOUTH

The term “youth” has no consistent definition. Depending on program goals the target audience of “youth” may consider only high school students or may consider older groups all the way up to university graduates and young professionals. The original program framework for TRCA’s Youth Council set the age threshold as 16 to 24 years old. It was noted, however, that the demographics of youth recruited in those first few months, skewed heavily towards a majority of female members. After consulting with TRCA’s Education and Training Division, as well as the Regional Watershed Alliance, the decision was made in 2019 to expand the age cut-off to 30 years old, as Education and Training staff had found that males were more likely to volunteer when they are older. Ongoing data collection shows the gender distribution gap lessening in more recent years, although a disparity remains between the number of males and females that register (Figure 1). The age distribution of registrants shows a bimodal distribution for females, with a peak in high school ages and another at the ages common for recent graduates of university; for males, there is a steady number of registrants spread throughout the target age range (Figure 2). The expanded TRCA Youth Council target age range allows for valuable peer mentorship between Executive members and for event programming to target audiences in various life stages.

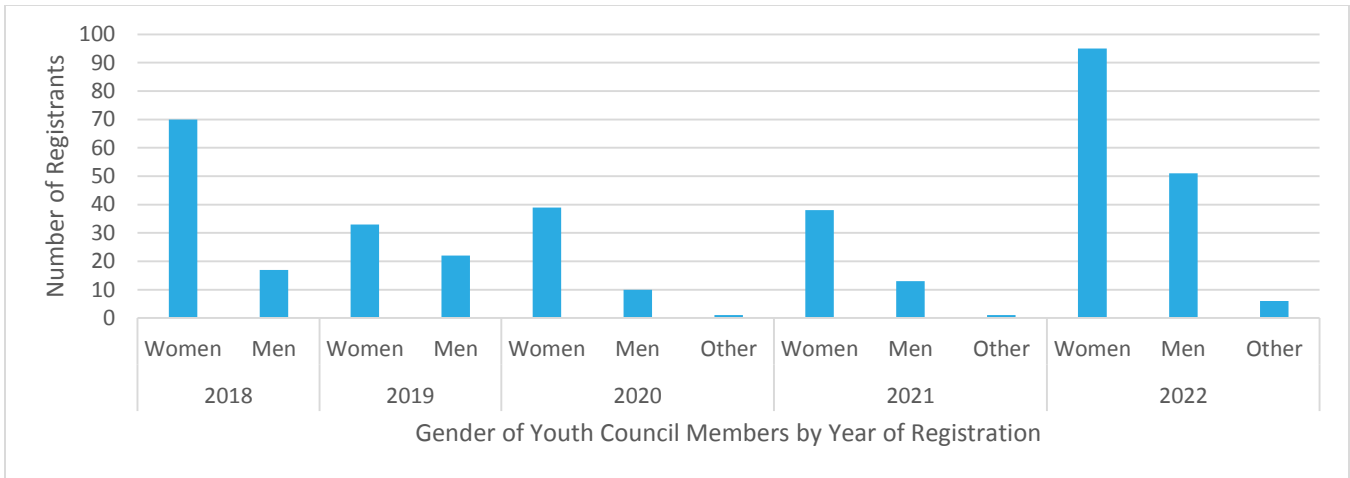


FIGURE 1 NUMBER OF REGISTRANTS BY GENDER AND YEAR

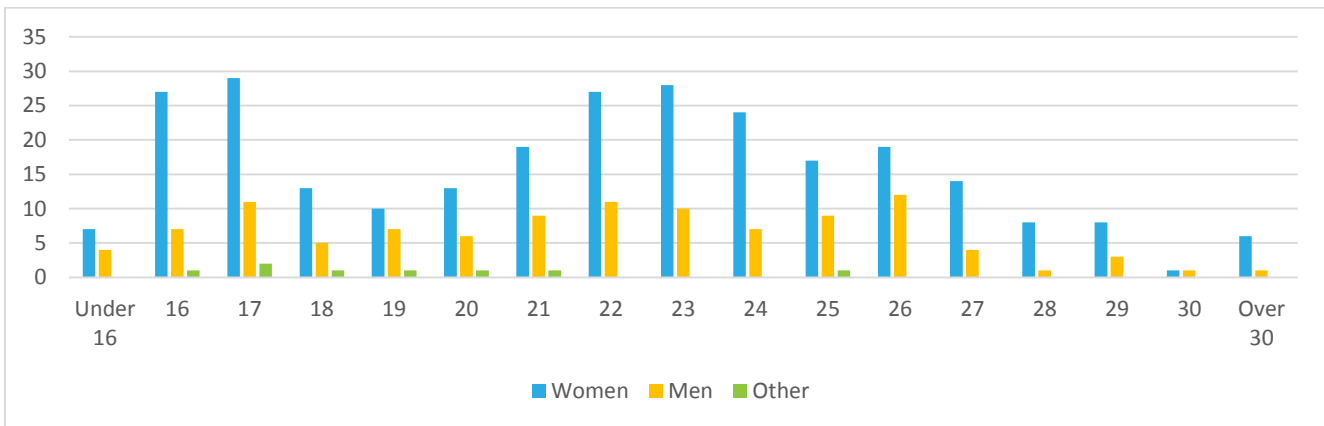


FIGURE 2 NUMBER OF REGISTRANTS BY GENDER AND AGE

RECRUITMENT

Recruitment was open from January 3 to January 31, 2022 for Youth Council Executive recruitment. Three members of the 2021-2022 Youth Council Executive elected to continue for a second term, resulting in seven vacancies. 16 applications were received this round (compared to 24 for 2021, 31 for fall 2019, and 19 for fall 2018). General membership recruitment is open year-round on the TRCA Youth Council webpage. In the calendar year of 2022, which includes overlap for the recruitment period for the previous Executive, the number of registrants increased by 152 members, from 244 to a total of 396.

Executive applications were evaluated by the RWA Youth Council Working Group and TRCA staff. Considerations for the selection of Executive members included: representation from across the jurisdiction, demographic factors, and merit based on the quality of application. Responses to short answer questions were weighted more heavily than other factors. Age was also factored into the assessment of their experience and writing level, as applicants ranged from high school to post-graduate level students and young professionals. Furthermore,

since there is a large age distribution, and since there has historically been less representation from the younger cohorts, two spaces were intentionally reserved for high school-aged applicants. It was decided not to hold interviews, as the role is volunteer based, and it would be difficult and time-consuming to schedule. The new Executive was selected in February 2022, with the final list of Executives brought to the RWA for approval at the RWA meeting held March 2, 2022 (RES.#4/22).

Representation on the Youth Council (both General and Executive) varies across TRCA's jurisdiction, with the majority of registrants in Toronto, followed by Brampton, Vaughan and Markham (Table 1). This is partially to be expected as a result of population and post-secondary institution distribution across the jurisdiction. In an effort to maintain diversity (geographically and demographically), specific outreach to communities continues to be made through the assistance of members of the Regional Watershed Alliance, municipal partners, other youth groups and councils, and agencies that work specifically with different communities.

As many initiatives led by the Youth Council in 2021 and 2022 were held online, the application form for Youth Council General membership, which includes access to our newsletter, did not restrict individuals from applying if they resided outside of TRCA jurisdiction. Hosting virtual events and increasing outreach efforts through social media, monthly newsletters, and personal communications were a focus of the 2022-2023 term and contributed positively to the increased number of Youth Council General members. Interestingly, recruitment efforts and virtual events resulted in an increase in interest from youth outside of TRCA's jurisdiction, including across Canada. It is also possible for youth to reside outside of TRCA jurisdiction but attend school within the Toronto Region.

TABLE 1: LOCATION OF YOUTH COUNCIL MEMBERS (BOTH GENERAL AND EXECUTIVE)

| Municipality | Count | Proportion of Total |
|----------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| Durham | 24 | 6% |
| Ajax | 10 | 3% |
| Oshawa | 1 | 0% |
| Pickering | 7 | 2% |
| Uxbridge | 3 | 1% |
| Whitby | 3 | 1% |
| Outside TRCA Jurisdiction | 21 | 5% |
| Alliston | 1 | 0% |
| Edmonton | 1 | 0% |
| Guelph | 5 | 1% |
| Kitchener | 1 | 0% |
| London | 1 | 0% |
| Milton | 3 | 1% |
| Montreal | 2 | 1% |
| Oakville | 5 | 1% |
| Peterborough | 1 | 0% |
| Other | 1 | 0% |
| Peel | 57 | 14% |
| Brampton | 38 | 10% |

| | | |
|---------------------|------------|-------------|
| Caledon | 3 | 1% |
| Mississauga | 16 | 4% |
| Toronto | 217 | 55% |
| East York | 1 | 0% |
| Etobicoke | 16 | 4% |
| North York | 24 | 6% |
| Scarborough | 38 | 10% |
| Toronto | 138 | 35% |
| York | 77 | 19% |
| Concord (Vaughan) | 1 | 0% |
| Kleinburg (Vaughan) | 1 | 0% |
| Maple (Vaughan) | 2 | 1% |
| Markham | 19 | 5% |
| Newmarket | 3 | 1% |
| Nobleton (King) | 1 | 0% |
| Richmond Hill | 14 | 4% |
| Stouffville | 6 | 2% |
| Thornhill (Vaughan) | 5 | 1% |
| Vaughan | 17 | 4% |
| Woodbridge | 8 | 2% |
| Grand Total | 396 | 100% |

IMPACT OF COVID-19

As health and safety restrictions further lifted in 2022, the Youth Council was able to return to some in-person programming but continued operating in a hybrid capacity. Virtual meetings and webinars for information sharing and discussion continued to be preferred by the Executive for time and cost savings, while place-based and hands-on activities were a highlight of individual events held in person. Familiarity with online meeting platforms and etiquette is now commonplace and use of social media increased the creativity used in organizing the Discover TRCA Summer Challenge and overall Youth Council recruitment.

YOUTH COUNCIL EXECUTIVE RETREAT

Youth Council Executive members met monthly through online meetings, as well as organizing and attending various events and initiatives (see below). In September 2022, eight of the ten Youth Council Executive members attended a day-long retreat at Kortright Centre for Conservation. This was the first chance for the Executive to officially meet in-person as a whole and since the COVID-19 pandemic. The retreat combined a number of fun activities, including icebreaker games, a tour of Kortright, exploration of the Archetype Sustainable House, and painting reusable canvas bags, with a more serious roundtable discussion about the goals and objectives of the TRCA Youth Council.



FIGURE 3: YOUTH COUNCIL EXECUTIVE MEMBERS AT KORTRIGHT CENTRE FOR CONSERVATION

The discussion questions were presented and answered in a circle, granting each member to answer individually or pass. The following questions were contemplated:

- 1) What does the TRCA Youth Council stand for?
- 2) What impact does the Youth Council have on TRCA?
- 3) What impact does the Youth Council have beyond TRCA?
- 4) What benefits are there to joining the Youth Council?
- 5) What is working or needs improvement?
- 6) How can we build a better network for our general members?
- 7) What can we start now?
- 8) Are there ways we can improve the structure of the Executive team?

The discussion was very fulsome and engaging as the Executive took a critical look at the four years of the existing Youth Council structure. Major themes that emerged included the following:

- The Youth Council Executive remain passionate and driven about raising awareness of environmental issues and participating in action on climate change, education, and inclusivity in the conservation sector;
- The Youth Council serves a role in educating youth about the work of conservation authorities in the Toronto region and providing learning and career opportunities
- Hosting fun events should continue to be focus for the Youth Council.

Major themes for improvement, as mentioned as well in the recommendations from the 2021-2022 Youth Council annual report, included:

- Increasing engagement with the General members of the Youth Council;
- Spreading marketing and outreach efforts to a larger demographic (such as through schools); and
- Increasing opportunities for youth to participate in, or provide input on, TRCA work.

WORKPLAN: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The broad goals and objectives outlined in the program framework remained the same from previous years. The following section outlines the initiatives created by the 2022-2023 Executive, and how they addressed program goals and objectives.

Objective: Build a Youth Network

As a new Government and Community Relations Coordinator was brought on in May 2022, the support for outreach increased. The Executive supported creation of nearly monthly newsletters (10 in 2022) by providing content and feedback. The newsletter items were often forwarded to other TRCA programs in education and public engagement, which increased the reach of Youth Council events and initiatives. Marketing efforts also included earlier social media posts on all TRCA platforms promoting all Youth Council events that were open registration for members of the public; we experimented with opening youth registrations first for events with limited numbers. LinkedIn remains a key opportunity for promoting career-focused webinars. Four Youth Council Executives also contributed testimonials that were featured on social media.

The reach of the TRCA Youth Council broadened greatly with opportunities to engage with groups internally at TRCA and externally. One Youth Council Executive member was represented at TRCA's Bike the Creek signature event in June 2022. The Youth Council collaborated with the Conservation Youth Corps in October 2022 to host a Meadoway stewardship and hike event in Toronto as well as to lead a climate action workshop at the Peel Climate Action Leadership Retreat at Albion Hills for an audience of 15 high school students. Groups that reached out to the TRCA Youth Council for participation or partnership in events or initiatives were: Oak Ridges Trail Association, Brampton Environmental Alliance, Ontario Science Centre, MP Leah Taylor Roy's Youth Council (Oak Ridges-Aurora-Richmond Hill riding), The 519, Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup, and Lakeshore Arts. Presentations were made at a documentary screening of *Into Nature's Wild* at the Ontario Science Centre (two Executives, 60 audience members) and to the Brampton Environmental Alliance (two Executives, 12 audience members) in June 2022.



FIGURE 4: EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL MEDIA PROMOTION FEATURING YOUTH COUNCIL EXECUTIVE MEMBERS KASTURI, LILLIAN, AKASH, AND ERINN.

Objective: Learn About What is Important to Youth

Youth Council Intake Survey

All members, whether they are applying for the Executive or as a General member, complete a survey as they register. The same survey has been used for the duration of the Youth Council program for consistency. Registrants are asked demographic questions and to select their top five interests from a list of 25 different topics. Topics include a range of sustainability, environmental, and social issues. For a more detailed description of the rationale for the selection of those topics and survey questions, see “TRCA Youth Council 2018-19 Report”.

Results

Demographics

Youth Council members are mostly from Toronto (55%, Table 1) and are mostly in their early to mid-twenties (Figures 2 and 3). This is reflective of the strong university network that we have tapped into. A small peak is also seen in high school-aged students aged 18 and under, possibly a result of having three current Executive members in high school themselves (Figure 2). As mentioned previously, the Youth Council membership is comprised of more females (69%) than males (29%).

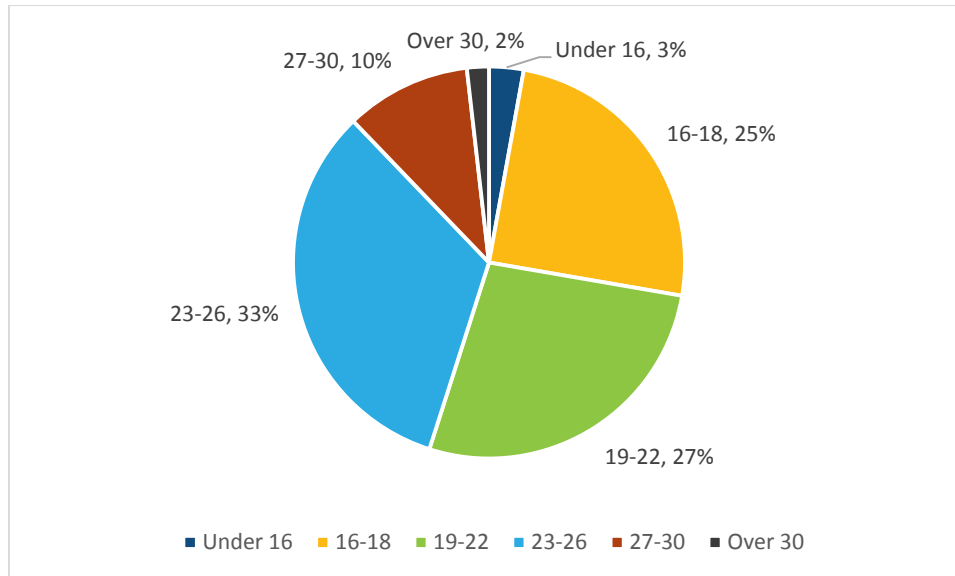


FIGURE 5: AGE DISTRIBUTION OF MEMBERSHIP

Most Important Issues

Registrants were instructed to select the top five most important issues to them from a list. This list included environmental, social, and sustainability issues, and was developed through a collaborative effort between the RWA Youth Council Working Group and TRCA staff (a more fulsome discussion of this process can be found in the “TRCA Youth Council 2018/19 Report”). Some respondents elected to choose more than five, and those additional answers were recorded. There is no way to determine the individual hierarchy of importance for each respondent; therefore we rely on the number of times an item was selected to indicate its overall importance to the entire group.

Aggregated responses were similar to last year (Figures 4 and 5), where climate change was once again the most frequently selected topic and throughout TRCA’s jurisdiction. Indigenous reconciliation and access to green space are topics that saw a large increase in interest in the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021. This year, we see a rebound in interests in wildlife and habitat conservation, biodiversity and sustainable development. We also see a general increase in greening the economy and food security, which may be related to wider economic and housing concerns discussed widely in Ontario in 2022.

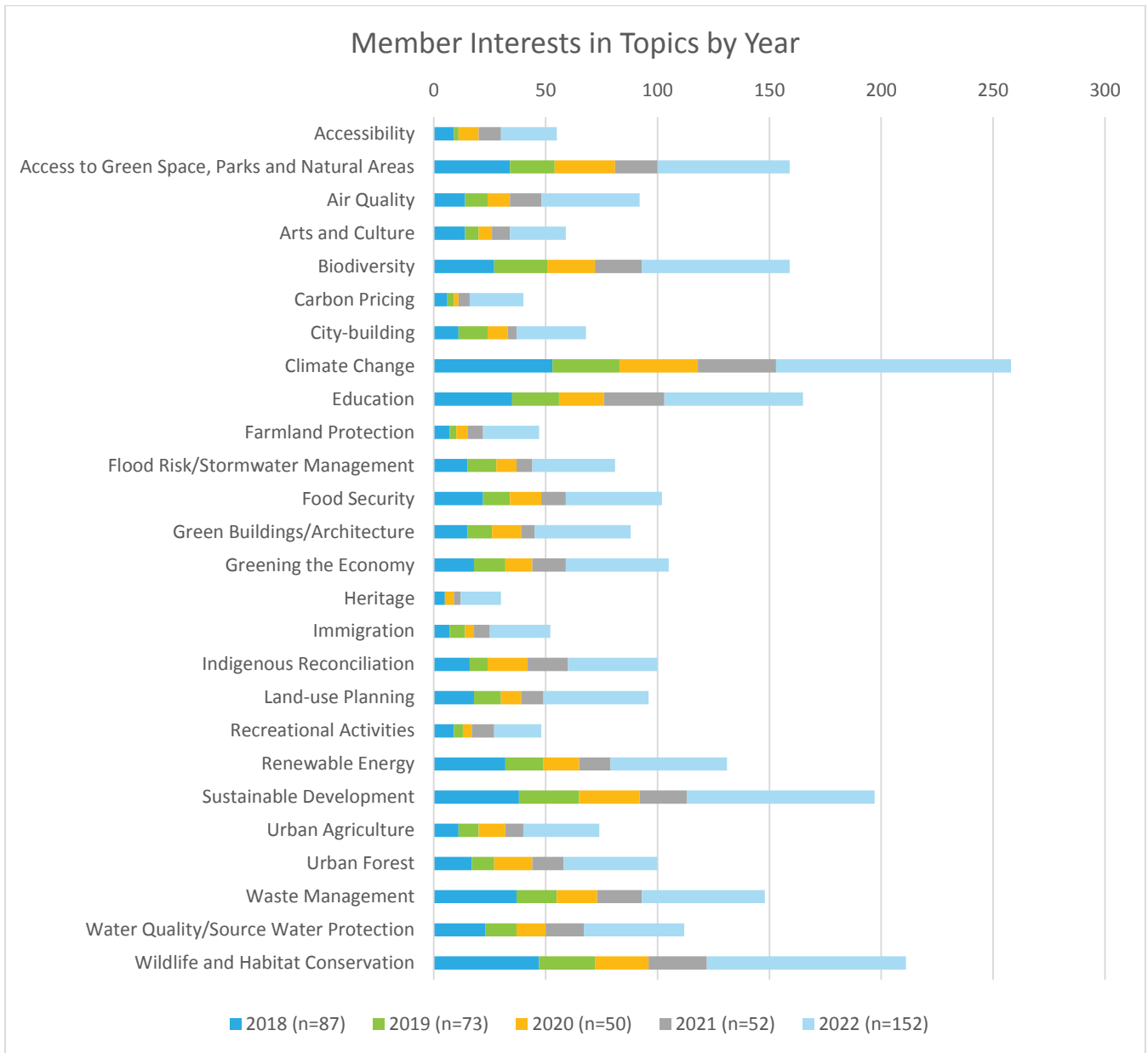


FIGURE 6: MEMBER SELECTION OF TOPICS BY YEAR

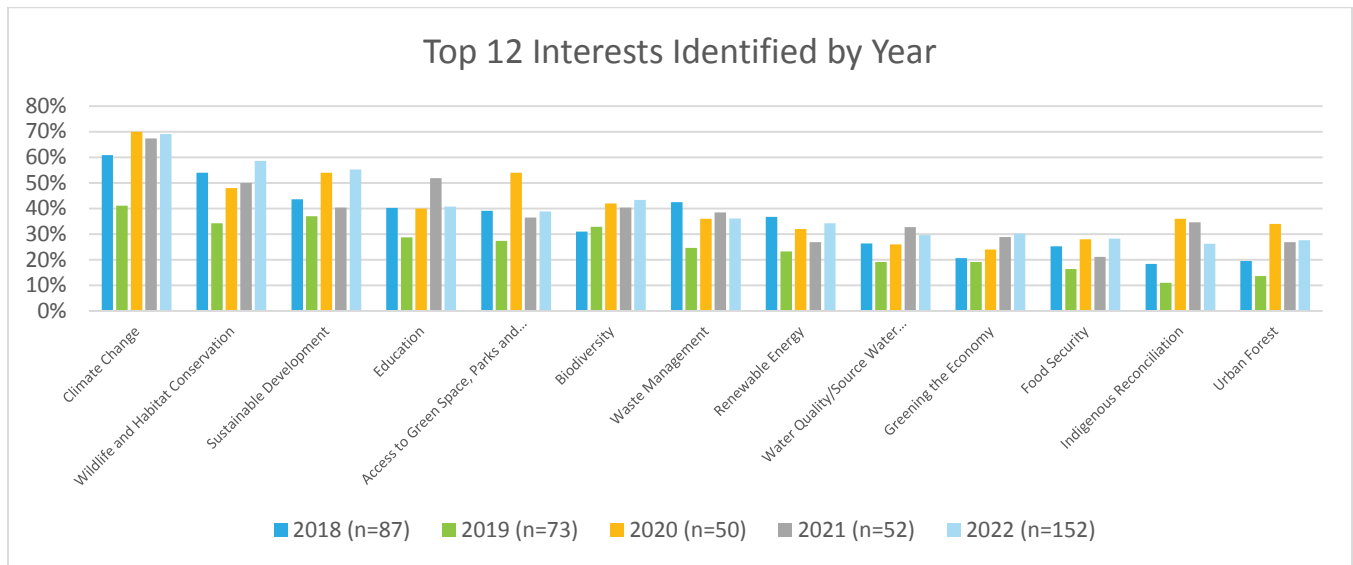


FIGURE 7: MEMBER SELECTION OF TOP 12 TOPICS BY YEAR

Oak Ridges Moraine Trail External Advisory Group

In Spring 2022, the Youth Council was contacted by TRCA Conservation Parks and Lands staff and the Oak Ridges Trail Association (ORTA) to engage a youth representative on an external advisory group for four meetings to prepare an updated Oak Ridges Moraine Trail Strategy. One Youth Council Executive volunteered as representative, and as part of collecting information about youth perspectives, the TRCA Youth Council launched a short survey distributed in three monthly newsletters.

Three questions were asked:

- 1) How important are the following aspects to you when deciding whether or not to visit a trail (at a green space, conservation area, or park)? [This question provided 14 options, see Figure 6]
- 2) What's your favourite part about visiting trails?
- 3) What are some improvements you would like to see at outdoor trails near you?

18 responses were collected. Common themes in the written responses included parking, trail design, wayfinding, trail maintenance, rule enforcement, wildlife viewing and appreciation of nature. Trail conditions were voted most important, followed by parking availability, admission fees, and biodiversity and habitat diversity. While the sample size was small, the feedback was still provided to the ORTA for consideration. A representative from ORTA was also able to join a meeting with the Youth Council Executive to discuss in further depth some important or innovative ideas that ORTA was exploring in its trail strategy. Feedback ranged on topics such as trail design, accessibility, and use of technology.

This was the first time the TRCA Youth Council Executive acted in an advisory capacity, but beginning in the 2023-2025 Regional Watershed Alliance term, two seats will be opened for the TRCA Youth Council to participate in the multi-stakeholder advisory committee to the TRCA Board of Directors.

How important are the following aspects to you when deciding whether or not to visit a trail (at a green space, conservation area, or park)?

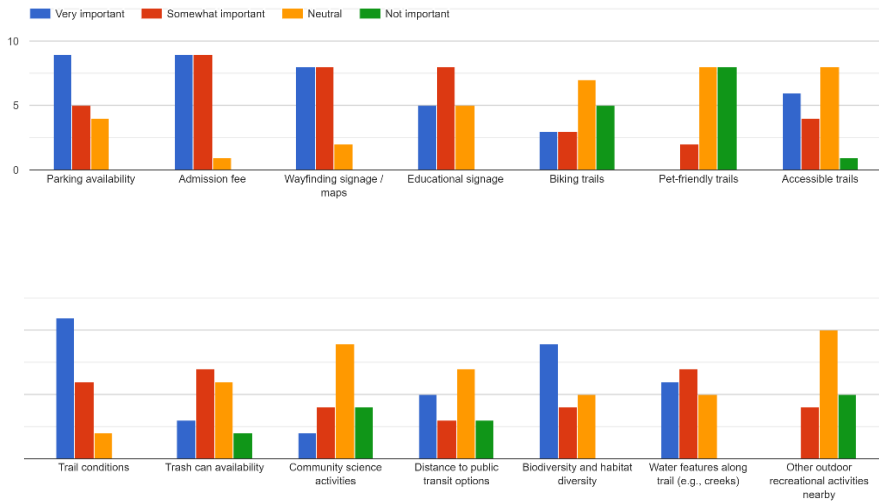


FIGURE 8: TRAIL VISIT CONSIDERATIONS BY IMPORTANCE ACCORDING TO SURVEYED YOUTH

Objective: Create Fun Opportunities

The Youth Council Executive was able to organize and host a number of events in 2022 and start of 2023, both in person and virtually. Participation in these events varied greatly, as we have found that some topics are more popular than others, particularly events focused on skill-building and careers. The following section provides a brief overview of each activity hosted by the 2022-2023 Youth Council Executive.

Discover TRCA Summer Challenge (July to September 2022)

This was a 9-week series of virtual challenges for members of the public, accessed via TRCA’s website. Each week featured three challenges of varying difficulty and length (from 30 minutes to half a day) related to a weekly theme, designed by the Youth Council Executive. The themes were: Truth and Reconciliation, species identification, sustainability, waste, reuse and repair, nature and storytelling, be an environmental champion, and water. A bonus week allowed anyone to submit challenges they may have previously missed. Challenges ranged from online research to hiking outdoors to learning a plant-based recipe. As an asynchronous event, the challenges were meant to be flexible for participants. Completion of at least one challenge for a week entered participants into a draw for a weekly prize. Two Grand Prizes were offered to the participant that completed the greatest number of challenges and to a winner of a random draw from all Summer Challenge participants. This event saw moderate success with 42 challenges received across the season. The virtual format of this event also required a greater amount of TRCA staff time to dedicate to website edits and social media postings.

Toronto Island Environmental and Flood History Tour (August 2022)

This unique event originated from Youth Council Executive member Elly Akkuyu, who had just recently completed her a Master’s degree in environmental applied science and management. Along with TRCA Erosion Risk Management staff, Elly designed a three-hour walking tour of the Toronto Island with stopping points to

discuss environmental and flood history information pulled from her research of the Toronto Islands. Stopping points were also added at sites where TRCA had completed emergency works following the 2017 and 2019 extreme flood events and at locations relevant to the ongoing Class Environmental Action and discussions of future flood and infrastructure protection. It was also an opportunity for the tour date to align with City of Toronto’s Island Master Plan pop ups, which included a TRCA table at Gibraltar’s Point. This event drew 5 participants. It was a learning experience to organize our first in-person event post-pandemic and to realize the challenges with offering free events at a busy public space that required specific transportation.



FIGURE 9: ELLY LEADING THE MORNING GROUP ON THE TORONTO ISLAND TOUR, AT WARD’S ISLAND

Meadoway Planting and Hike Event (October 2022)

This was a three-hour event at Thompson Memorial Park in Scarborough in partnership with TRCA’s Conservation Youth Corps programming in Toronto and led by Community Learning staff. Activities included a short tour of stormwater management features around Highland Creek and an opportunity for participants to learn to hand seed and maintain restoration plantings in a section of the Meadoway, a long-term restoration project by the TRCA on 16 km of hydro corridor in Scarborough that will eventually connect the Rouge and Don River watersheds. Youth Council Executive members led icebreaker activities and portions of the tour content. 22 participants attended on the beautiful and sunny Saturday afternoon, notably including some families and younger children.



FIGURE 10: LEFT, PARTICIPANTS HELPING WITH WEEDING AND MAINTENANCE OF THE MEADOWWAY. RIGHT, TISHA DEMONSTRATING FACTS ABOUT SNAKES ON THE HIKE.

Traditional Craft Workshop with Diane Montreuil (November 2022)

The Youth Council hosted an afternoon workshop at the Downsview Park Community Hub, a free space for community groups. Diane Montreuil is an Algonquin-Metis artist and educator that has previously worked with TRCA and school boards in the Toronto region, and she taught participants how to make traditional choker necklaces with leather and bone. Despite the snowstorm, 11 participants attended.

This event was also our first paid event, as we collected a small fee for art supplies needed. Paid events seem to encourage a higher proportion of attendees compared to registration numbers for free events. However, free participation for any youth with financial barriers was accommodated for this event.



FIGURE 11: LEFT, PARTICIPANTS WORKING ON THEIR NECKLACES. RIGHT, A GROUP PHOTO AT THE WORKSHOP WITH DIANE.

Objective: Build Youth Capacity and Learning Opportunities

Peel Climate Action Leadership Retreat (October 2022)

Two Executive members led a workshop at Albion Hills to 15 high school students on taking climate action. The workshop included a presentation with examples of personal climate stories and a Venn diagram method of

determining climate actions. This was followed by a small group brainstorming session implementing the diagram method, with participants provided a template for creating their own personal climate action plans.

TRCA Youth Council Virtual Town Hall (November 2022)

Arising from discussions at the September Executive retreat about the need to better engage general members, the Executive planned a virtual town hall to include an overview of the TRCA Youth Council program, a presentation by Anil Wijesooriya, Director of Restoration and Infrastructure, and Youth Council discussion questions. The question-and-answer period with Anil was informative and the youth that attended learned a lot about restoration and infrastructure projects, as well as careers at TRCA. While the lower turnout of General members was not conducive to an in-depth discussion, following this event, it was decided that future presentations and career discussions should be recorded so that more people can view the information at a later date.

Infrastructure Planning and Permits Webinar (January 2023)

The Youth Council hosted Beth Williston, Associate Director, and Shirin Varzani, Senior Planner, from TRCA's Infrastructure Planning and Permits team for a presentation on infrastructure planning, environmental assessments, permits, and planning careers. Held on Zoom, TRCA was also able to collect information about attendees, which included participants located in a range of watersheds in and out of TRCA jurisdiction, and a spread of undergraduate students, graduate students, and young professionals in the environmental sciences, GIS, planning, and biology. The two-hour webinar format was a great length to include a lengthy question and answer session. 18 participants attended and the recording will be posted to TRCA's Youtube channel and Youth Council webpage.

Virtual KAIROS Blanket Exercise (February 2023)

A blanket exercise is an immersive and interactive session to learn about Indigenous and non-Indigenous history of this place we call Canada, facilitated by KAIROS Canada. This event will be hosted by the Youth Council on February 4, 2023.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Structure

The structure of the Youth Council has seen some minor adjustment since the program's inception, namely the delivery of a combination of online events in 2020 and 2021, now with a return to select in-person events. Having a good age range on the Youth Council Executive enables better promotion of initiatives, from high school to young professional audiences. Continuing members will help maintain institutional memory and facilitate more events to continue running into the transition between terms. Logistically, the Youth Council Executive continue to meet monthly but have seen increased informal communications between meetings. The 2022-2023 Youth Council Executive preferred not having assigned roles throughout the year but were very engaged in volunteering for tasks and enjoyed rotating through monthly roles, which included Chair and taking minutes for meetings. The TRCA Youth Council will soon hold two seats on the Regional Watershed Alliance, which will allow the Executive to learn more about TRCA's programs and services and to provide more youth perspective on TRCA strategic goals.

Goals and Objectives

Build youth network

The youth network continues to grow as more groups reach out to learn about the Youth Council, and more events are hosted with various different partners. Hosting events in partnership with other groups is a great opportunity for network development. By extending our audience through partner networks, other groups can be reached that may not have been previously aware of TRCA. Use of LinkedIn and TRCA's education newsletters also benefitted network growth. Providing a combination of in-person and online initiatives on a variety of topics draws in different audiences through flexibility of choices and accessibility.

Learn about what is important to youth

The entrance survey continues to provide the most robust data indicating the most important issues to youth. As was discussed earlier, some changes in the most frequently selected topics changed from year to year, which has been reflective of the current situation that has arisen from the pandemic, such as social movements in diversity, inclusion and Indigenous reconciliation, and concerns on housing and economy in Ontario. The Youth Council will continue to collect this data to inform their, and TRCA's, programming.

Create fun opportunities for youth

The Youth Council Executive have continued to pursue diverse fun opportunities for youth. Event themes included climate change, habitat conservation and stewardship, sustainable communities, and learning about Indigenous history and culture, in line with the interests of the general and Executive members. Fun opportunities increase the draw for more members of the public to join a single event and/or to sign up for the General membership list with the Youth Council.

Build youth capacity and learning opportunities

Capacity building amongst the Youth Council Executive has been significant. Extending the terms of some of the Executive has resulted in strong peer-to-peer knowledge sharing and mentorship, which has increased the overall capacity of the Youth Council Executive. The returning Executive members set expectations and norms that helped to ensure that the 2022-2023 Executive remained consistently engaged throughout their term. Furthermore, the mentorship and expectations set by the group helped to provide an atmosphere where new members were comfortable sharing ideas and taking the lead on new activities and initiatives.

The activities held by the Youth Council Executive were empowering not only for the participants, but also for the youth organizing the events. Opportunities to present to small and large audiences lead to growth in leadership and public speaking skills for Executive members. The Youth Council Executive also gained valuable experience organizing events of varying formats, from two-hour-long walking tours, to a season-long series of challenges, to hosting Zoom webinars with polls and breakout rooms. Initiatives that invite Indigenous speakers and presenters also fostered deeper understanding of Indigenous history and culture, and provided experience and capacity for the Youth Council to address issues of reconciliation in their future work.

The Youth Council Executive continue to benefit greatly in their academic and employment pursuits through the skills and experiences they gain as part of the program. This year, they have had multiple opportunities to meet formally and informally with staff from various TRCA divisions, opening their perspectives to the diversity of career opportunities at conservation authorities and in the wider environmental sector. There continues to be

great opportunity to demonstrate interesting and unique work done by TRCA staff to the Youth Council, as well as to engage former TRCA seasonal staff for the long-term through the Youth Council program.

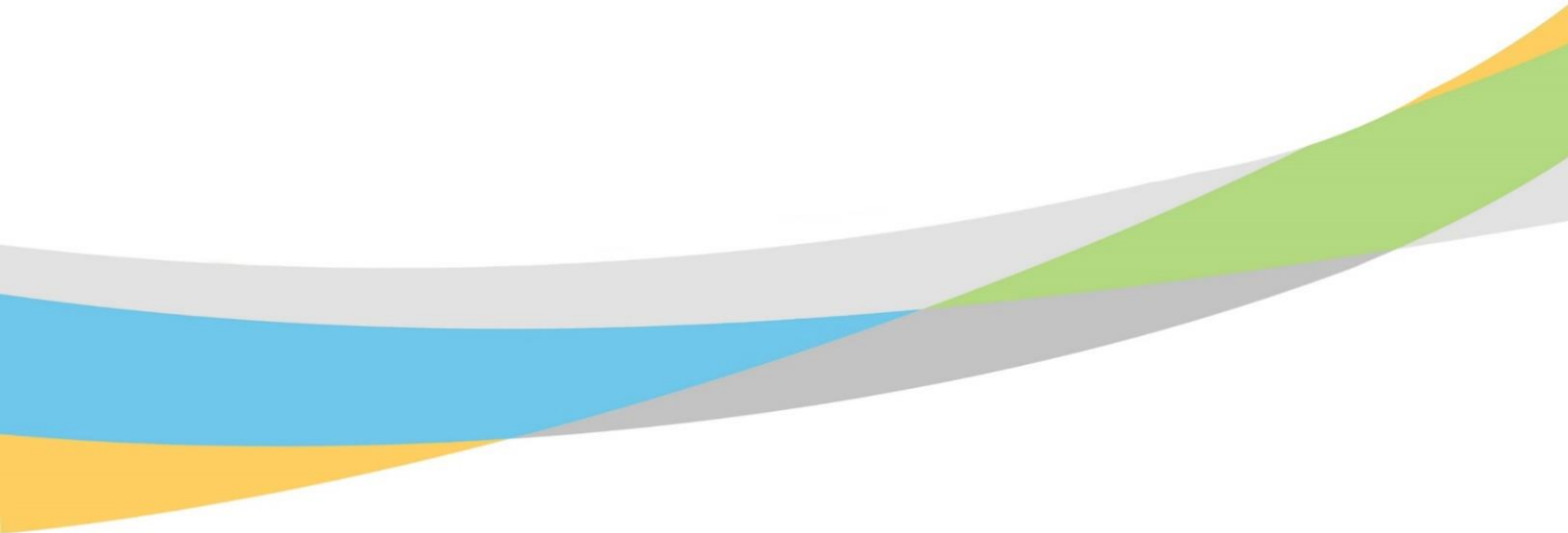
RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the Youth Council continues to reach program goals of creating fun opportunities for youth, building capacity, identifying youth perspectives, and building a youth network. The following is a summary of the recommendations for program improvement through the evaluation of meeting goals and objectives:

- Continue hybrid program delivery with online offerings for presentations and discussion forums, and in-person offerings for place-based or hands-on activities
- Continue network building and marketing the TRCA Youth Council, tapping into other TRCA education and public-facing programs and TRCA connections with municipal and external partners
- Strengthening the connections between the Executive and General members of the Youth Council through individual outreach to new General members and open Executive meetings on occasion
- Building a communication platform to re-engage former Youth Council Executives to champion initiatives and attend events
- Continue efforts to broaden the recruitment of the Youth Council to include more members from diverse communities through more deliberate recruitment strategies with different groups/agencies who work in target communities
- Continue to find synergies between TRCA's work and strategic goals/priorities and the work of the Youth Council

CONCLUSION

The TRCA Youth Council program seeks to engage youth aged 16-30 in TRCA's jurisdiction. It is a program that is led by youth under the mentorship and guidance of TRCA staff. As restrictions eased in 2022, the Youth Council was able to organize a combination of virtual and in-person events. Virtual events are preferred for information sharing and saving time and costs, while in-person events were intentional around place-based and hands-on activities. The events and initiatives of 2022 are demonstrative of the continued drive and passion of the 2022-2023 Youth Council Executive. And while there are some recommendations for program improvement, we are pleased to see how the Executive has been able to achieve progress towards the goals set out in the program framework. This term also saw a great increase in the number of General membership sign ups. Major strengths from the 2022-2023 term are the variety of Youth Council event programming offered and the increase in outreach efforts through marketing and presentations, which led to an increase in the number of General membership sign ups. The program has also had a positive impact on Executives in developing their leadership and public speaking skills, as well as supporting their academic and professional pursuits. With these successes in mind there is, however, always room to improve program delivery. We have provided a number of recommendations, including the continuation of engagement of General members and former Executive members, broadening the network to include more recruitment with different groups and agencies who work with under-represented communities, and finding synergies between TRCA's work and strategic goals that can better incorporate Youth Council perspectives.



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